and envy at these fair creatures who continued work and home in one long pleasant Burmese continuity. They are girls from the ages of sixteen upward. Probably their parents set them up in these stalls, each separated from its neighbour by a stack of cotton bales, six or seven stalls on a long platform. They come there in the mornings, dressed in crisp muslin jackets and bright longyis, their faces powdered with thanakha and the Five B's, flowers in their hair, and fragrant ground bark on their hands and feet. They open up shop and dust with feather brooms while they shout across to each other the news of the previous evening. Then the whole day unfolds, calling out to food sellers and treating their friends to a succession of delicacies, button-holing the young boy who hawks magazines and tuppenny novels, and reclining against a pile of the tha-yet-hte longyis to read these romances, helping each other to fold up the pieces after a troublesome customer has gone, anything but making an earnest business of their profession. They always looked so cool and pretty and indifferent beside the small Indian storekeepers who flanked their platforms and solicited passers-by for patronage. "Oh to be a bazaar girl!" I still thought when I was in the University; "to pass unchaperoned days, reading novels and eating sweets, to have time to be powdered and neatly dressed, and only now and then be disturbed by someone who wants to buy a longyi." 361 438

Our starched white muslin jackets are made out of fine transparent muslin manufactured in England, and sent out in bales of 11 yards with the quality stamped in Burmese characters, and on the jacket a florid illustration of the quality-name—names such as *Nat-thami, Sein ta-hsok, Shwe Pan-gaing, Mè Nyo:* Heavenly Damsel, Cluster of Diamonds, Golden Spray of Flowers, Dusky Maiden—and imported by both Indian and Burmese traders. 294 439 563

The making up of the jackets was the monopoly of Chinese tailors; our *tayok-kalay*, little Chinaman, lived in the crowded quarter of Yegyaw in a barnlike room which was carpenter's shop at one end and tailor's at the other. The tailor's end had a row of shelves along the wall in to which the finished garments and uncut material were shoved, higgledy-piggledy in paper bags on which the merest scribble denoted owner and date of order. In front of this was the counter on which the cutter was at work, and separating it from the carpentery end was a table at which one or two half-clad men always seemed to be eating noodles or reading a Chinese newspaper, of which there were three in Rangoon. In spite of this, the tayok-kalay never confused an order for garments which had to fit so meticulously and always delivered them in a snow-white condition. He charged 9 annas for each fine handsewn garment, and for modern girls managed to cut twelve out of the eleven-yard piece. This 294 563 441 465

was sweated labour indeed. Possibly he paid the cutter two pice, the seamstress three annas, the button-loop maker two annas, for each garment. We met one of the button-loop makers one evening as she brought a pile of finished garments, a Chinese girl of ten years, with eyes which looked tired from two years of exquisite hemming on the ten button loops of each Burmese jacket, nine jackets each day. When we had got our jackets the tayok-kalay added up our three bills into one on his abacus. There may be many ways of using an abacus, but our tayok-kalay's was bafflingly simple. He had each bead on the first rung representing one anna, each on the second one representing four of these, that is four annas; and each on the third rung representing four of these again, that is one rupee, there being sixteen annas in the rupee. When he wanted to add Rs. 5/10 and Rs. 9/11 for example, he represented the first sum on the three rungs above the median bar by drawing down towards it, two beads of the first rung, two of the second and five of the third. Then he represented the second sum on the rungs below the bar by drawing up to it three beads of the first rung, two of the second and nine of the third. He then counted up the sum of all the beads along the bar, pushing back every four beads of the first rung and pulling down one of the second as equivalent, pushing back every four of the second and pulling down one of the third again as its equivalent. All this he did with lightning speed, and, counting finally one bead on the first rung, one on the second and fifteen on the third, he announced Rs. 15/5, a sum which my sisters had arrived at long before by mental arithmetic and had, in vain, been trying to thrust on his notice.

I needed also a superior quality comb to wind my hair around in a knot at the back of my head, having given away the old one I had as a curiosity in England. My mother took me to the west end of Rangoon where the Chinese community are concentrated in about six or seven streets, mostly narrow streets of three storeyed houses packed closely together, containing valuable ivory and mother-of-pearl inlaid chairs within and jewellery behind safe doors, but bordering deep and dirty drains and congestion in the street. These were houses of rich men who got their money from trading in indigenous products; by long years of industry building up lakhs of money from the supplying of onions, coconuts, potatoes and other dry goods to the retail shops in bazaars. In the Strand running along the south end of these streets and in the broad Latter Street in the centre of the quarter, were the big emporiums of these traders. One of my father's greatest friends U Chein-Swan was a Burma Chinese of this description, and we stayed for short periods in his three-storeyed house in 20th Street when we were children. With

great hospitality they gave our family one floor to put up in whenever we came; they were ten times richer than we, but I never decided whether my days there were more filled with shrinking or with enjoyment. The trays of a myriad red and yellow cakes which were spread before our eyes fascinated me while I was in terror that I would slip into the muddy drain beside which the cake-seller set his tray; the opalescent lights of the mother-of-pearl chairs felt cool and smooth as I stroked them until I suddenly turned and met the stare from the Confucian gentlemen on the wall, with trailing moustaches and Chinese eyes; and the wonder which I felt at the beauty of U Chein Swan's fair daughters with their sparkling diamonds round neck and wrists was tinged with horror at what my nurses made of an orthodox Chinese marriage—the uncanny music, they said, the heavy clothes, and the wedding meal would be followed by the bride belonging forever to the clan of her husband.

In search of a comb, however, we went to more humble streets where my mother knew the Sino-Burmese comb sellers. The lady of the house came running out of the kitchen as soon as she heard us, set fruit and cool drinks before us and gossiped while she sent for the virgin sheets of tortoise shell. We held them to the light, and picked out the particular area which had the prettiest markings; discussed the shape and size and thickness of the comb and the best arrangement for the honey and brown markings. All this my mother wanted her to do for Rs. 5/- but the lady laughed and wheedled her for six rupees because, she said, sailors had had to go as far as Java to get some of her shells.

Although gold work is still given to Burmese goldsmiths in preference to any other, the trade in diamonds is not in Burmese hands. Rangoon dwellers went to buy their diamonds at Moghul Street where a whole row of Hindu jewellers set up shop fronts and interiors in which high-powered electric bulbs, mirrors upon mirrors, technicolour photographs of the heads of the houses and of Hindu gods, all combined to make an unutterably gaudy display. Still, we took off our slippers on the threshold of these shops, and talked with great respect to the *Babugyi*, who faced us across a velvet padded counter on the floor.

Now I only needed buttons to hold the loops of my jackets together. Except for the occasions when diamond buttons or gold filigree-work buttons are worn, the ordinary Burmese woman wears coloured buttons of cut glass or stone to match her longyi. For the poorest classes, glass buttons imported from Czechoslovakia could be bought at 2 or 3 annas a set of five, complete with glass rings to slip into the loops. But these were indeed glassy and did not last long. In Mandalay were the expert Burmese cutters, who for anything from six annas to Rs. 5 produced buttons of every description, plain, speckled, striped; of glass,

441 563 semi-precious stones, or gold dust, all cut with many tiny facets. We once had in our house a heavy glass vase, imported by an English firm, of a dull bluish-black colour. One day a wind mercifully blew the vase on to the floor where it broke into a hundred pieces. My cousin gathered up the pieces and the next time she went to Mandalay her button cutter fashioned them into several sets of round sparkling buttons catching the light and showing now black, now grey, now blue, one set of which I wear to this day. These and the velvet slippers which are universally worn were sold in the market by young Burmese women sitting opposite the tha-yet-htè longyi sellers. The slippers also came from Mandalay, and in the days of the last Burmese king, the common people were forbidden to wear them; they were reserved for royal use alone.

[438 565]

265 563 At last my sisters considered that I was suitably dressed as the elder sister of such fashionable young ladies as they had now grown into, and equipped to attend any social function of the town. Although Burmese people love gathering to eat and drink, hotels and restaurants did not exist in Rangoon society. Both the Western restaurants where people danced and drank alcoholic drinks, and the leading Chinese restaurants where the dolled-up Chinese waitresses served the male customers with playful attentions, were out of bounds for Burmese women, and therefore not greatly frequented by Burmese men either, except in the case of the Chinese hotels as a carousal. Night bazaars were, however, eminently respectable, all Rangoon families being addicted to the habit of eating out as a supper after their dinner at home. They drove in cars to the pavement stalls of Chinatown, Moghul Street and Yegyaw; at Burmese stalls they got out and squatted on the benches provided, while the seller served them from the cooking pot beside her; at Indian and Chinese shops they had a plank thrust through to rest on the doors of the car, and ate sitting there. After eating rich Mohammedan food or delicious Chinese dishes, they drove a few streets further on to eat in the same fashion at an ice-cream or sherbet stall. It was a good life indeed.

546 177. 54 We usually did this after the cinema. While we went to see American films, my mother and her friends invariably went to a Burmese film. There were four Burmese cinema halls in Rangoon, whose box offices were always besieged, but in spite of this the cinema industry in Burma was not a thriving one. Actors and actresses were poor and suffered a social stigma. About twenty-five feature films were produced in Rangoon each year, both sound and silent, by companies whose prosperity never lasted more than a few years. They could often be seen filming their outdoor scenes round the Royal Lakes, the University Estate and the fields around Mingaladon, using studios only for indoor scenes. In pite of this, the effects aimed at were ambitious, especially in the earlier

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma (Europeans)AP1
Burmese AP4

cable with men who have not yet fallen into the clutches of the chetties, and the result has been almost invariably to drive them into the money-lender's arms. The Burmese, it it is to be feared, have not sufficient stability of character. U Myaing or Maung Po never had so much money before in their lives as the advances figure to. They do not know the value of it, and proceed to squander the rupees forthwith; and so, long before the paddy is delivered they are heavily in the usurer's books, and then Maung Po and U Myaing have to do as they are bidden. Moreover, the system in any case could hardly be a safe one. The cultivator might die; there might be a flood or a jungle fire; many things might happen, in fact, to prevent the advance boats from ever reaching the Puzundaung creek. Consequently many English firms have given up the practice, and instead send agents away up the creeks, far into the jungle, to negotiate with the farmers on the spot and try to secure paddy before rivalry has had time to raise the price. But even this expedient does not answer well. The chetties do their best to throw obstacles in the way. It is not without expense, and it impresses the cultivators with a notion of the great demand there is for paddy.

The telegraph, they say, ruins business. The paddy season opens in February with a price of, say between seventy and eighty rupees a hundred baskets. The merchants declare they will not be forced into materially increasing this rate, and the home-firms charter a number of ships. Meanwhile the price of paddy steadily rises, while rice in England steadily goes down; and by the time the vessels discharge their cargo in Liverpool or London, milled rice is not very much dearer in wholesale shops than the raw paddy in the Burmese boats. New mills are constantly being started—which would seem contradictory, were it not that all the firms starting them have business of another kind; teak sawmills, cotton or piece-goods trade, silks for Burmese men and maidens, or jute and grey shirtings for Upper Burma and the hill tribes. Rice will certainly always be wanted, and there is any quantity of it to be had in Burma. A little more of the sterling probity which used to be associated with the name of the English merchant would

I4: Brant E-5 (1949-50) 1954 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

If the umbrella falls down it indicates that the spirit has departed and cannot return. The person who performs this ritual must not talk to anyone en route to the cemetery. 764

On the seventh day a ceremony takes place. The monks come to the house to eat and chant prayers. They are given offerings for their own use and a special tray containing white thread. The monks hold the thread, which symbolizes good, while they chant. The people present are seated before the monks, repeating the prayers and precepts after them. The deceased person is supposed to be sitting on the mat prepared for him and benefiting from this ceremony. Then the people are fed, the monks depart, and the influences of death are considered to be banished. The thread is kept in the house. 764 769

Graves are not visited, nor is there any upkeep of the cemetery, for folk belief has it that the tidying of graves will cause more people to die. The dead are commemorated by the meritorious act of feasting the Buddhist monks.

Associations

Bus Union. Owners of buses plying between Tadagale and Rangoon are organized into a union. In terms of its functions, this organization might be more fittingly termed a mutual protective and insurance association. These are to prevent outsiders from infringing on their route and competing with them; payment of damages in case of accidents between members' buses and other vehicles or persons; payment of any costs of litigation that arise in connection with accidents; and maintenance of a repair shop and mechanic in the village. Members of the union pay an initial sum to join, plus monthly dues and a small toll fee for each trip that is made. 441 ● 494

Peasants Union. The Tadagale Peasants Union is a constituent body of the All Burma Peasants Union and operates directly under the Insein Division of the parent organization. Some fifty to sixty households in Tadagale are members. When the head of a family or household joins, the union regards all its members as union members. In theory, meetings are supposed to occur once a month, but in fact take place at irregular intervals, whenever a problem arises that is considered sufficiently important to warrant a meeting. Commonly this is a dispute between members over land. If opinion remains divided after considerable discussion of a dispute or other issue, the union meeting votes by written ballot. 467 427 185

The more long-run aims of the Peasants Union concern rent and taxes of cultivators. Protests and petitions are sent to the government when it is felt taxes are too high. The union was characterized as 'an organization that is against the landlords.' At the time of our research, its aim was to reduce the landowners' share of the produce to one-third from two-thirds. The union also favored land nationalization, under which it was believed rent would be paid in a just amount to the government. Just where the Peasants Union fitted in with existing political party programs and alignments in the country at large it was not, for various reasons, feasible to investigate.

Ceremonial Assistance Groups. For purposes of rendering help at such ceremonies as weddings, funerals and initiations, the villagers are divided into informal groups. These are: men's group; married women's group; and unmarried girls' group. The men's group does the heavier tasks, such as chopping and carrying firewood, erecting ceremonial structures, and preparing 575 476